

Utah Wildlife Board

(August 28, 2008)

Recommended Action: Approve Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan

UTAH AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

**Prepared by the Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force
Larry B. Dalton, Chair
Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator**

Executive Summary

(Review the entire plan: www.wildlife.utah.gov/invasivespecies/aisplan)

Utah, unfortunately, has become home to several species of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) over the years. Some AIS that exist in other areas of the nation and world have not yet made their way to Utah, but we fear they could. Prior to 2007 the Utah Division of Wildlife Resource only committed a small part of one staff person's time to the problem, although biologists statewide occasionally directed their efforts toward specific local AIS problems. Universities, tribal, federal, state and local government agencies, including private interests and organized sportsman groups, also on occasion directed some effort toward the AIS problem. The advancing threat from *Dreissena* mussels, based on the quagga mussel finding in Lake Mead, Nevada during January 2007, spurred the state of Utah to action. It was the "straw that broke the camel's back." Threats and impacts from the multitude of AIS already in the state, not to mention those on their way, became fully recognized as needing more attention.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in concert with other partners within the Utah Department of Natural Resources, launched an aggressive campaign in 2007 to:

1. Assess threats from *Dreissena* mussels.
2. Advise the public, particularly decision makers, of the ecologic and economic impacts from *Dreissena* mussels.
3. Develop needed policy to advise divisions within the Utah Department of Natural Resources and other departments within Utah state government about *Dreissena* mussels and how Utah would react.
NOTE: NR-07-D-11—Policy to Prevent Invasion of Zebra Mussel Into Utah Waters assigned Utah Division of Wildlife Resources as lead agency within Utah to carry out the program.
4. Initiate an emergency "Quagga Mussel Education and Implementation Plan."

5. Secure stable funding to conduct a more robust attack against AIS in general, with *Dreissena* species being a primary focus.
NOTE: The 2008 Utah Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million general funds, of which \$1.4 million is ongoing, to allow Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to conduct an AIS program.
6. Develop new laws as needed.
NOTE: The 2008 Utah Legislature unanimously passed the Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Interdiction Act. Thus, new rule R657-60 Possession of Aquatic Invasive Species, allowing enhanced AIS management and enforcement, provides authority to make stops of trailered watercraft at boat launch sites, administrative check sites, and Utah ports of entry, including a mandate for self-certification pre-launch by watercraft operators declaring their boats and equipment to be mussel free. It also allows the closing of water bodies that become infested with *Dreissena* mussels until an acceptable plan for containment and control is developed.
7. Develop and implement a comprehensive Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan.
NOTE: The Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, representing a multitude of tribal, federal, state, and local government agencies; private water use businesses; and organized anglers; was formed to prepare and guide implementation of this “Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan.” The plan was subjected to public review via Utah Division of Wildlife Resources’ five statewide Regional Advisor Councils and approved by Utah’s Wildlife Board and the governor, which led to ultimate approval by the national Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

The main thrust of Utah’s Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan is to deal with *Dreissena* mussels, although many activities are ongoing with other AIS. New Zealand Mud Snails have been found in Utah’s Loa Hatchery, and they have been found at Utah’s Midway Hatchery on the property, but not in the hatchery yet. Actions are ongoing in Utah’s hatchery system to deal with the mud snail problem. Individual hatchery Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plans are in place, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources New Zealand Mud Snail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) Management Plan for Loa Hatchery has been implemented.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources’ AIS biologists and others have found New Zealand mud snails in river and stream segments previously not known as infested. Verification of New Zealand mud snail identifications has been done by Utah’s Natural Heritage Program.

Others in the aquatic section aided by Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force partners are moving forward to spray treat Eurasian Milfoil in Mantua Reservoir and Fish Lake. Re-treatments may occur as needed.

Additionally, spray treatment followed by burning of common reed (*Phragmites* spp.) has been ongoing for several years and will continue through the efforts of Utah Division of

Wildlife Resources' waterfowl personnel throughout Utah's wetlands along the east side of the Great Salt Lake and other places. Likewise, tamarisk treatment statewide has been ongoing for years. Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force partners have been participants to varying degrees for treatment of both species.

A full time AIS coordinator is now assigned to Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' aquatic section to lead a statewide program, and an AIS outreach specialist is assigned to assist with outreach needs. Also, five full time AIS biologists have been placed in the aquatic section--one in each of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' five regions. Also, 35 wildlife technicians have been assigned as seasonal employees in the aquatic section to perform as watercraft inspectors; they were placed at priority waters statewide. Most technicians were provided with a trailer-mounted decontamination unit capable of spraying high pressure, scalding (140 degree Fahrenheit) water, which will kill all the AIS known either within or threatening Utah. Five conservation officers have been placed to assist, as needed, with AIS law enforcement needs.

Some of the Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force partners have been able to secure funding to assist in this effort, too.

In an attempt to better perform early detection of *Dreissena* mussels, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' Fishery Experiment Station is coordinating with Utah State University's Fish and Wildlife Department on possible ongoing research comparing various early detection methodologies. Early detection could allow attack on an invading population of *Dreissena* mussels, possibly controlling or eradicating them. Knowledge gained from this research may lead to protocols for early detection of other AIS, too, allowing successful eradication or early control.

The *Dreissena* mussel campaign, beyond water craft interdictions by AIS biologists, technicians and others, including Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' conservation officers, Utah State Parks and Recreation's rangers, other Utah peace officers and Utah Department of Transportation's port of entry agents, is mostly an outreach effort. That effort operates under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's national "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" program logo and slogan. This allows coordination among all states in the nation in order to fight aquatic invasive species. Presentations in Utah and at national meetings about AIS, particularly the quagga and zebra mussel threat, have been made to many interested publics (e.g., tribal, federal, state, and local governments and sportsman organizations).

Significant actions for outreach implementation as supported by available budget will continue as follows:

1. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources aided by our many partners, including the Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, is placing the 100th Meridian Initiative's "Zap the Zebra" brochure (250,000 units per year) statewide at locations where boaters and anglers will encounter it. During 2007 the effort included direct mail by Utah State Parks & Recreation of the brochure to 65,000

registered boaters in Utah.

NOTE: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is negotiating with the Utah Division of Motor Vehicles to incorporate an AIS message in their annual vehicle registration packets to boaters.

2. Utah State Parks & Recreation is direct mailing a notice to all fresh water boat dock users (500 units) in the state park system, detailing the quagga and zebra mussel threat, including need for decontamination of boats and equipment.
3. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is placing table-top displays (5,000 units per year), urging the public to "Help Stop Invasive Mussels" and to properly decontaminate their boats and equipment, across Utah at restaurants, boat dealer counters and other places where boaters and anglers would encounter the message.
4. Numerous highway billboards are being placed statewide, urging boaters to "CLEAN," "DRAIN," and "DRY" their boats to aid in the fight against the spread of AIS. Billboard presentation equates to 168 months of advertising display.
5. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is placing signs (1,500 units per year as full color foam core 11" x 17") and identical posters (4,000 units per year as full color 11" x 17") across Utah in areas frequented by boaters and anglers.
6. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is placing entry signs (150 units per year as full color metal 33" x 54"), similar to the aforementioned poster, that demand self-certification as "mussel free" by boaters prior to launch at all significant water bodies across Utah.
7. The corner stone of the outreach effort, which is directly linked to the watercraft inspections, is a self-certification program for boaters to document that their watercraft have either not been contaminated with *Dreissena* mussels, or that their boats have been properly decontaminated. Every boater contacted will be asked to certify pre-launch that they have done their part to "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers." Boaters will be presented with a self-certification form and asked to sign and display it on the dashboard of their vehicle. Boaters who arrive at times when no agency personnel are present, will be instructed via the aforementioned metal entry signs to secure a self-certification form and to fill it out, displaying it on their dashboard. Containers making the self-certification form available 24/7 will be mounted with the aforementioned metal entry signs. Decontamination units are located at or nearby to most boating waters in Utah. Unfortunately, sufficient funds are not available to staff boat launch sites on a 24/7 basis. Possibly, launches during after hour times could be closed for incoming boaters by fencing off the boat ramp and installing one-way tire deflating devices. Boaters could still safely leave a site after hours, but those arriving could not launch until their boat is properly inspected by trained personnel.

NOTE: It is unlawful (R-657-60) for a boat to launch that needs decontamination.

8. The National Park Service at Lake Powell has been an outstanding cooperator, aiding Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and leading by example. They have conducted a similar *Dreissena* mussel campaign at Lake Powell as described above and began it several years ago.
9. The Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan includes a "rapid response plan." It will guide the Utah Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force and water body

managers in dealing with new arrivals of AIS or the spread of existing AIS.